



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

NEFMC Announces Coral Amendment Public Hearing Schedule

The New England Fishery Management Council will hold seven public hearings on its Draft Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment to collect input from fishermen and other stakeholders on the alternatives being considered to protect corals in the inshore and offshore Gulf of Maine and in the offshore canyon/slope region south of Georges Bank.

Hearings will be held May 22 through May 25 in five states – New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine sequentially – and then a webinar hearing will wrap up the series on May 26.

Date and Time	Location
Monday, May 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	Montauk Playhouse Community Center 240 Edgemere Street, Montauk, NY 11954
Tuesday, May 23, 1:00-3:00 p.m.	University of Rhode Island Bay Campus, Corless Auditorium 215 South Ferry Road, Narragansett, RI 02882
Tuesday, May 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Fairfield Inn and Suites 185 MacArthur Drive, New Bedford, MA 02740
Wednesday, May 24, 1:00-3:00 p.m.	NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930
Wednesday, May 24, 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Sheraton Harborside 250 Market Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801
Thursday, May 25, 5:00-7:00 p.m.	Ellsworth High School 299 State Street, Ellsworth, ME 04605
Friday, May 26, 1:00-2:30 p.m.	Webinar See next page for details

The alternatives in the amendment are designed to reduce potential impacts of fishing activity on corals. Restrictions on bottom-tending mobile and fixed gear are listed among the alternatives. However, the Council is considering possible exemptions for some or all types of fixed gear, such as lobster traps, deep-sea red crab pots, and gillnets. At its April 20-22 meeting in Mystic, CT, the Council selected “preferred” alternatives. Some of these selections included fixed gear exemptions.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Council is not obligated to choose the preferred alternatives when it takes final action. All oral and written comments received during the public hearing process will be thoroughly reviewed and considered before the Council makes final decisions.

The Council’s preferred alternatives, along with maps showing the proposed coral protections areas, are described in the Council’s news release from the April meeting, which is available at: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/NEFMC-Selects-Coral-Preferred-Alternatives.pdf>.



New England Fishery Management Council

Attend a Hearing, Participate in the Webinar, or Submit Written Comments

Anyone who cannot attend a hearing in person is encouraged to join the Council's May 26 Deep-Sea Coral Amendment webinar at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/98257139389273345>

Detailed information about how to successfully log on and provide oral comments is described in the public hearing notice at:

http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/170428_Coral-Amendment_public-hearing-notice.pdf

The public hearing process is a prime opportunity for interested parties to speak up and provide the Council with feedback and preferences on the Draft Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment alternatives.

The Council's Habitat Committee is scheduled to meet May 30 to review input received during the public hearings and develop recommendations for the full Council to consider at its June 20-22 meeting in Portland, ME. The Council is scheduled to take final action on the coral amendment at the June meeting.

"Deep-sea corals are fragile, slow-growing organisms that play an important role in the marine ecosystem and are vulnerable to various types of disturbance of the seafloor." – NEFMC public hearing notice

Written Comments

The Council is accepting written comments on the coral amendment until Monday, June 5 by email, postal mail, or fax.

NOTE: *Written comments received before Wednesday, May 24, 5 p.m. EST will be reviewed by the Habitat Committee on May 30 and will be used by the committee to help formulate recommendations for the full Council.*

(1) **Email** comments to:
comments@nefmc.org

(2) **Mail** comments to:
Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950

(3) **Fax** comments to:
(978) 465-3116

Label correspondence as "Comments on Deep-Sea Coral Amendment."



Redfish in Jordan Basin (upper photos), haddock in Jordan Basin (lower left), dogfish and cusk at Outer Schoodic Ridge. – Peter Auster photos

- Documents related to the Coral Amendment are available at: <http://www.nefmc.org/library/omnibus-deep-sea-coral-amendment>
- For more information, contact NEFMC Habitat Coordinator Michelle Bachman at (978) 465-0492 ext. 120, email mbachman@nefmc.org.